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1850

ORATION

DELIVERED BY

THE HON. HENRY S. FOOTE,

ON THE

Fourth of July, 1850,

AT MONUMENT PLACE,

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION.

Published by the National Monument Society

WASHINGTON:
PRINTED BY HENRY POLKINHORN.

MDCCCL.

INTRODUCTION.

The Board of Managers of the WASHINGTON NATIONAL MONUMENT SOCIETY, having deemed it expedient to celebrate the anniversary of our National Independence, appointed a committee, consisting of Messrs. WATTERSTON, SMITH, and CRAWFORD, to make the necessary arrangements for the celebration.

The honorable HENRY S. FOOTE, of Mississippi, was requested to deliver an Oration or Address on that occasion, to which he kindly assented; and the necessary preparations were made for the celebration at *Monument Place*, by an extensive awning, and other accommodations, for those who might attend. The excessive heat of the weather prevented the formation of a military and civic procession, as was at first contemplated by the Board of Managers, but a large number of citizens and strangers attended, to participate in the ceremonies on that occasion. A spacious and commodious platform was erected at the east front of the Monument for the accommodation of the orator and invited guests; and at the appointed hour the Rev. Mr. BUTLER opened the ceremonies with an appropriate prayer, and was followed by WALTER LENOX, Esq., Mayor of Washington, who read the *Declaration of Independence* in a clear and distinct voice, and was succeeded by the honorable HENRY S. FOOTE, in an eloquent Address suited to the occasion. The Rev. Mr. MORGAN pronounced the benediction; and the company were then invited to witness the ceremony of hoisting and laying the large block of marble presented by the Corporation, to be deposited in the Monument, at its west front. General WALTER JONES, on behalf of the Councils of the city, delivered an eloquent Address on the occasion, and G. W. P. CUSTIS presented, with some feeling remarks, a box of sand, sent by Dr. LIEBER, and taken from the tumulus of *Kosciusko, in Poland*, to be mixed with the mortar used in laying one of the stones of the Monument. The ceremonies on this occasion were very interesting and imposing, and at their conclusion the company retired highly gratified with the ceremonies they had witnessed.

The President of the United States, with a portion of the Cabinet, united in the ceremonies of this interesting occasion, and manifested a deep interest in the success of the patriotic undertaking of the Society. It was the last celebration he was destined to attend; for, a few days afterwards, he departed this life, after a short and fatal illness, to the profound regret and sorrow of his countrymen.

A short time before his death, he uttered the following sentiment in relation to the magnificent Monument now being erected in this city, which it is hoped will be reciprocated by every American who venerates the character of the great benefactor of his country. "*Let it rise!*" said he; "*let it ascend without interruption; let it point to the skies; let it stand forever as a lasting monument of the gratitude and affection of a free people for the Father of his Country.*"

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PRAYER

Delivered by the REV. MR. BUTLER at the commencement of the ceremonies.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father! King of kings and Lord of Lords, whose wise providence ordereth all things in heaven and earth, Thou art a strong tower and defence to those who trust in Thee; Thou art the giver of every good and perfect gift. We adore Thee as the God in whom our fathers trusted, and were delivered. We have heard with our ears, Oh Lord, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works which Thou didst in their days in the old time before them. Thou didst give them a goodly heritage; Thou wert with them in their hour of peril; Thou didst crown them with victory in the day of battle; Thou didst break the rod of their oppressors; Thou didst bestow upon them the unspeakable blessings of civil and religious freedom.

We thank Thee, Heavenly Father, for all these thy mercies bestowed upon them and upon us their children. We praise Thee that we are still permitted to hail this anniversary of our National Independence as a prosperous and united people. May we recall Thy mercies which have been ever of old; may we remember that it is not for our righteousness that Thou hast brought us in to possess this good land. Not unto us, Oh Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the praise. Now that our flocks and our herds are multiplied, and our silver and gold are multiplied, and all that we have is multiplied, let us not say in our hearts that our power and the mightiness of our hands have gotten us their wealth, but let us remember the Lord our God!

We confess before Thee, Oh God, with shame and humiliation, that many sins testify against us. We have abused thy gifts; we have been lifted up with pride; we have boasted of our strength; we have been ungrateful for Thy mercies; we have not been devoted to thy service. We beseech Thee mercifully to look upon our infirmities, and turn from us those evils that we most justly have deserved. Turn Thou us, Oh Lord, and so shall we be turned. Make us to be a nation fearing Thee, and working righteousness. Teach us to realize that it is righteousness that exalteth a nation, and sin only that is a reproach to any

people. Make us a wise and understanding nation to know and do Thy will. Then shall our land give forth her increase, and God, even our own God, shall give us His blessing, and all the ends of the world shall fear Him.

We pray Thee, Heavenly Father, to avert from our beloved land every impending evil, and to withhold from us Thy just and desolating judgments. Persevere us still as a peaceful and united people. Remove from us all alienation, wrath, clamor, and evil speaking. Let us not be visited with the unspeakable woes and horrors of disunion, anarchy, and war. We pray for Thy special and abundant gifts of wisdom, forbearance, justice, and paternal love to all our magistrates, lawgivers, and public officers in this crisis of our country's history. Bless the President, the Vice President, and the Congress of these United States: give unto them wisdom to devise and fidelity to execute such measure as shall restore harmony and love, and promote the public prosperity and peace. May the ties which bind us together as a people be, by the exercises and influences of this day over all the land, mightily strengthened and closely drawn. We entreat Thee by the memory of Thy mercies in the past; we implore Thee by all the blessings of the present, and all the hopes of the future, that Thou wouldst stretch forth the right hand of Thy power to help us, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations.

O God, the creator and preserver of all mankind, we humbly beseech Thee, for all men, that thou wouldst be pleased to make Thy ways known unto them, Thy saving health to all nations. Let Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Hasten the period when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountain, and be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it. We ask these blessings in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. AMEN!

ORATION.

Friends and Fellow-Citizens :

Once more have we assembled upon this, the natal day of American Independence, formally to manifest the respect and gratitude which we feel for those wise and patriotic ancestors to whom, under Heaven, we are indebted for the priceless blessings of civil and religious liberty. Almost two-thirds of a century have now passed away since the adoption and signature of that solemn declaration which announced to the civilized nations of the earth that the British colonies in America were free, sovereign, and independent States; and the particular day in the calendar upon which this important declaration was made, has ever since been set apart as a day of peculiar sacredness, whose annual recurrence has uniformly called forth in all countries under the sun, where the principles of republican freedom are held in respect, those sentiments of gratulation, and rejoicing, and profound thankfulness which I am sure now animate the hearts of those by whom I am surrounded. It would be a great error, in my judgment, to suppose that the sage and philosophic statesmen who were assembled in Independence Hall upon the fourth day of July, seventeen hundred and seventy-six, were induced to undertake the high act of State which has given to them all a deathless immortality, by a desire merely to relieve the colonies which they represented from the burden of illegal taxation. The signers of the Declaration have themselves formally pronounced the great and salutary truth, that "Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes;" and in assuming for those whom they represented "that equal station among the Powers of the earth to which the laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitled them," they conceived "that a decent respect for the opinions of mankind" required them to make known "the causes which controlled their action. It was no grievance, either menaced merely

or which they had reason to apprehend might in future be experienced by the colonies ; it was not a feeling of mere local jealousy, nor a desire for sectional aggrandizement, which brought about the separation of the colonies from the parent country, but “ a long train of abuses, pursuing invariably the same object, evincing,” as they thought, “ a design to reduce them under absolute despotism,” which stimulated them to that noble assertion both of the “right” and “duty” of those subjected to injustice to “throw off the government” which had become tyrannically oppressive to them, and to “provide new guards for their future security.” The solemn recital of those wrongs and usurpations which is to be found in that sacred instrument which has this moment been read in our hearing, must ever be regarded by all unprejudiced minds as more than justifying the men of the Revolution in resorting to the God of Battles for deliverance from thralldom ; for we find in this black catalogue of grievances almost every enormity that has ever yet disgraced the annals of tyranny, among which are the following : 1. The refusal on the part of the British Sovereign to give “ his assent to laws most wholesome and necessary to the public good.” 2. “ The obstruction of the laws of naturalization,” so important to the inhabitants of a newly settled region. 3. The interruption of the administration of justice, “ by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.” 4. The erection of a “multitude of offices” by a self-assumed power, and “sending into the colonies swarms of new officers to harass the people and eat out their substance.” 5. The keeping up of standing armies in time of peace without the consent of the colonial legislatures. 6. The attempt to render the military independent of and superior to the civil power. 7. The overthrow of the right of trial by jury. 8. The abdication of all government in the colonies, by declaring them out of his protection, and actually waging war against them. These, together with the most odious and annoying restraints upon trade, the most selfish and illiberal interference with the domestic industry of the colonies, and the imposition of unconstitutional taxation, made it indispensable that our colonial forefathers should forever terminate

their "allegiance to the British Crown," and secede from their connexion with the British people, holding them, as they held "the rest of mankind, enemies in war—in peace, friends"

It will not be expected that I shall descant at present upon the incidents which marked the progress of our revolutionary struggle, as they are doubtless already familiar to all whom I now address. Yet may it be more or less profitable to us to notice for a moment a few of those incipient movements in the colonies, which, looking at first to nothing beyond securing the repeal of British enactments deemed unjust, in some regularly parliamentary mode, were fated soon to eventuate in the establishment of a solid confederative organization of sufficient potency to break to pieces the solid fabric of British power, and forever to sever from the British empire the fairest colonial domain over which king or potentate has ever yet been known to wield the sceptre of authority. 1. Among the colonial movements alluded to, we find legislative resolutions against acts of Parliament regarded as unconstitutional in their character, or felt to be oppressive in their operation. 2. Articles of agreement, called associations, "by which those who subscribed them were bound not to purchase or use the manufactures of England, except in cases of the most urgent necessity. 3. Efforts to bring about concert of action between Virginia and the colonies of the North. 4. Plan of a general Congress. Thus far did the people of the colonies proceed without any apparent desire to dissolve that union which had so long subsisted between themselves and the parent State; nor can it be asserted that any expectation was generally entertained that such an event would finally take place, before the first actual collision of arms between the regular soldiers of Britain and the undisciplined militia of the colonies, which occurred in the neighborhood of Boston, upon the 17th day of June, 1775. That this was the condition of the public mind in America up to the period specified, is alike testified by authentic legislative acts, and by the well known declarations of prominent individuals who were shortly to participate in the scenes of revolutionary strife which were, in fact now almost at hand. In the address of the first Congress to the people of Great Britain,

the following striking language was held : " You have been told that we are seditious, impatient of government, and desirous of independence. Be assured that these are not facts, but calumnies." General WASHINGTON himself, though endowed with a sagacity as to the future which few men have ever evinced, was far from looking with confidence to the commencement of civil war, though he seems never to have doubted that if blood should be once shed, in such a contest of opinion as was then in progress, it would be wholly impossible to prevent the colonies from asserting and achieving their independence. Whilst attending as a member of Congress from Virginia, he responded to a letter which he had received from a British officer at Boston, between whom and himself relations of particular friendship existed, in part as follows : " Although you are taught to believe that the people of Massachusetts are rebellious, setting up for independence and what not, give me leave, my good friend, to tell you that you are abused, greatly abused. This I advance with a degree of confidence and boldness which may claim your belief, having better opportunities of knowing the sentiments of the people you are among, from the leaders of them in opposition to the present measures of the administration, than you have from those whose business it is not to disclose truths, but to misrepresent facts, in order to justify themselves, as much as possible, to the world for their own conduct." It may be, indeed, most safely asserted that, had the British government, even at that late period, consented to do justice to the colonies, and refrained thereafter from unjust and insulting legislation, the great event of American independence might have been postponed at least for another generation. But Britain was inexorable. Profoundly blind to all the consequences, likely to ensue, totally misunderstanding the character of a portion of her own people—not supposing it even possible that less than three millions of colonists would venture to engage in a war with one of the most powerful nations of Europe—and never doubting that if even the spirit of rebellion should display itself in a few quarters, North and South, it would be an easy task to repress it at once, and bring the offenders to justice, she persevered in her course of unjust ag-

gression, and ultimately ordered the commencement of hostilities. *The result is before the world—a perpetual lesson to tyrannic rulers, and to freemen unwilling to be despoiled of their dearest rights!* Thrice fortunate was it for our colonial ancestors that there was among them at this critical period such a personage as GEORGE WASHINGTON, in whose illustrious character were blended all the great qualities which so pre-eminently fitted him for the performance of those arduous duties which were about to be devolved upon him. No one has ever lived concerning whose merits as a public man so much has been said in just commendation as of General WASHINGTON; and yet may it be well doubted whether the language of eulogy has quite come up to his unequalled virtues and his exalted capabilities. Of his admirably balanced intellect, judgment was the leading and predominating attribute. Cool, considerate, unprejudiced; firm, conscientious, persevering; pervious to the counsels of those in whom he confided, yet resolute, fearless and energetic in action. Modest, but dignified in his manners, to a degree at times almost bordering upon sternness—yet kindly affectioned, sociable, and susceptible of the strongest personal attachments. As ambitious of true glory as a wise man could well be, yet profoundly indifferent to the voice of contemporaneous applause, and utterly regardless of the delusive tokens of mere transient admiration. Free from all appearance of envy, selfishness, or “that weakest weakness vanity,” he on all suitable occasions admitted and extolled the merits of others, whether inimical or friendly to himself—was never in his life suspected of intriguing for his own advancement to public honors, or for the prostration of a rival; and he is believed on no occasion to have indulged even for a moment in indelicate self-commendation. His early education was of a very limited character, indeed, but he amply supplied his deficiencies in this respect by a close observation of the world, and by a free and unreserved intercourse with men of learning. His extensive and varied experience both as a military man and as a colonial legislator (having served continuously for fifteen years in the House of Burgesses of his native State) particularly qualified him for the career which destiny seems to have opened be-

fore him; as, in pursuing this career, he was to be called upon alike for sage counsel in regard to the high exigencies of State, and to meet the enemies of his country in the field, as commander-in chief of the armies raised for the maintenance of freedom and independence.

It is generally conceded that there was one ingredient in the character of General WASHINGTON which distinguished him pre-eminently among the statesmen and heroes whose fame has been committed to authentic history. I allude to that astonishing *self-control* exercised by him on all occasions, even amidst the most trying circumstances of his public life. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city;" and of WASHINGTON has it been truly said, "His highest ambition was for the happiness of mankind; *his noblest victory the conquest of himself.*"

Though endowed with sensibilities of more than ordinary susceptibility, and exposed for many years of his life, in a peculiar manner, to causes of irritation and excitement, he is not known ever to have given way to a public exhibition of passion, or intemperate feeling of any kind: and, though bitterly assailed during his second Presidential term by a portion of the newspaper press of the country, yet did he bear up and sustain himself under coarse revilement, caustic denunciation, and even the low ridicule of carping censurers, with a patient dignity and unfaltering performance of duty which justify me in saying of him, in the language of poetry:

The man whose mind, on virtue bent,
Pursues some greatly good intent
With undiverted aim,
Serene beholds the angry crowd,
Nor can their clamors, fierce and loud,
His stubborn honor tame.

Not the proud tyrant's fiercest threat,
Nor storms that from their dark retreat
The tameless surges wake;
Not Jove's great bolt that strikes the pole,
The firmer purpose of his soul
With all its power can shake.

Should Nature's frame in ruins fall,
 And chaos o'er the sinking ball
 Resume primeval sway,
 His courage, chance and fate defies,
 Nor feels the wreck of earth and skies
 Obstruct its destined way.

Fifteen years after the death of WASHINGTON, one who would not be suspected of being inclined to do him more than justice, said :

"He was incapable of fear, meeting personal dangers with the calmest unconcern. Perhaps the strongest feature in his character was prudence, never acting until every circumstance, every consideration, was maturely weighed ; refraining if he saw a doubt ; but when once decided, going through with his purpose whatever obstacles offered. His integrity was most pure, his justice the most inflexible I have ever known—no motives of interest or consanguinity, of friendship or hatred being able to bias his opinion."

Mr. Jefferson adds :

"He was, indeed, in every sense of the word, a wise, a good, and a great man."

Impartial history will record that General WASHINGTON was not less successful in administering the civic concerns of the Republic, as the Chief Magistrate of a free and enlightened people, than he had been as a Commander-in-Chief in the war that established our national independence. Twice was he unanimously elected to the Presidential office, in opposition to his own ardent wish to escape that distinction ; and it is remarkable that eminent statesmen, of the most dissimilar opinions, and cherishing for each other the fiercest political rivalry, agreed in urging him to continue in public life. For thus did Mr. Jefferson write to General WASHINGTON in 1792 :

"The confidence of the whole Union is centred in you. Your being at the helm will be more than an answer to every argument which can be used to alarm and lead the people in any quarter into violence or secession. North and South will hang together, if they have you to hang on ; and if the first corrective of a numerous representation should fail in its effect, your presence will give time for trying others not inconsistent with the Union and peace of the States. I am perfectly aware of the oppression under which your present office lays your mind, and of the ardor with which you pant for retirement to domestic life. But there is sometimes an eminence of character on which society have such peculiar claims as to control the predilection of the individual for a particular walk of happiness

and restrain him to that alone, arising from the present and future benedictions of mankind. This seems to be your condition, and the law imposed on you by Providence in forming your character and fashioning the events on which it was to operate ; and it is to motives like these, and not to personal anxieties of mine or others, who have no right to call on you for sacrifices, that I appeal from your former determination, and urge a revival of it, on the ground of a change in the aspect of things. Should an honest majority result from the new and enlarged representation—should those acquiesce whose principles or interests they may control—your wishes for retirement would be gratified with less danger, as soon as that shall be manifest, without awaiting the completion of the second period of four years. One or two sessions will determine the crisis ; and I cannot but hope that you can resolve to add one or two more to the many years you have already sacrificed to the good of mankind.”

And thus wrote Mr. Hamilton on the same subject :

“ It is clear that, if you continue in office, nothing materially mischievous is to be apprehended—if you quit, much is to be dreaded ; that the same motives which induced you to accept originally ought to decide you to continue till matters have assumed a more determinate aspect ; that indeed, it would have been better, as regards your own character, that you had never consented to come forward, than now to leave the business unfinished, and in danger of being undone ; that in the event of storms arising, there would be an imputation either of want of foresight or want of firmness ; and, in fine, that, on personal and public accounts, on patriotic and prudential considerations, the clear path to be pursued by you will be again to obey the voice of your country. I trust, and I pray God that you will determine to make a further sacrifice of your tranquillity and happiness to the public good.”

Two years ago, a distinguished son of New England, in delivering an impressive and instructive Address in connexion with the imposing ceremony of laying the corner-stone of that noble monument whose grand proportions and soaring majesty begin already to attest the generous fullness of a nation’s gratitude to her greatest benefactor, uttered language which I am proud to have an opportunity of now reiterating. He asked : “ Who ever thinks of WASHINGTON as a mere politician ? Who ever associates him with the petty arts and pitiful intrigues of partisan office seekers or partisan office-holders ? Who ever pictures him canvassing for votes, dealing out proscription, or doling out patronage ? ” I confidently answer, *No one !* There was too much of true elevation of sentiment and disinterested patriotism in his lofty soul, to allow him to play, for a single day or a single hour, the contemptible part of a partisan President. Indeed, I am perfectly

persuaded that it would be grossly unjust to recognise him as having been, at any period of his life, a partisan at all, in the sense generally attached to that term. No man deplored party excesses more than he did, or was more inclined to condemn those illiberal prejudices which the warfare of party is so well calculated to engender. In confirmation of what I have ventured to declare upon this point, allow me to read a short extract from a letter written by him to Mr. Jefferson, in the year 1792 :

“How unfortunate and how much to be regretted is it, while we are encompassed on all sides with avowed enemies and insidious friends, internal dissensions should be harrowing and tearing our vitals. The latter to me is the most serious, the most alarming, and the most afflicting of the two ; and without more charity for the opinions and acts of one another in governmental matters, or some more infallible criterion, by which the truth of speculative opinions, before they have undergone the test of experience, is to be forejudged, than has yet fallen to the lot of fallibility, I believe it will be difficult, if not impracticable, to manage the reins of Government, or to keep the parts of it together; for if, instead of laying our shoulders to the machine after measures are decided on, one pulls this way, and another that, before the utility of the thing is fairly tried, it must inevitably be torn asunder ; and in my opinion the fairest prospect of happiness and prosperity that ever was presented to man will be lost, perhaps forever.

“My earnest wish and my fondest hope, therefore, is that, instead of wounding suspicions and irritating charges, there may be liberal allowances, mutual forbearances, and temporizing yieldings on all sides. Under the exercise of these, matters will go on smoothly, and, if possible, more prosperously. Without them every thing must rub ; the wheels of Government will clog ; our enemies will triumph ; and, by throwing their weight into the disaffected scale, may accomplish the ruin of the goodly fabric we have been erecting.”

At the close of his last Presidential term, in his memorable Farewell Address, he again expressed himself as follows :

“I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the State, with particular references to the founding them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally.

“This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists in different shapes in all Governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed ; but in those of the popular form it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy.

“The alternate dominion of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissension, which, in different ages and countries, has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this

leads, at length, to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and, sooner or later, the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation on the ruins of public liberty.

“Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind—which, nevertheless, ought not to be entirely out of sight—the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

“It serves always to distract the public councils, and enfeeble the public administration; it agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms; kindles the animosity of one part against another; foment occasional riot and insurrection; it opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the Government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.”

Fellow-citizens, such was the life, character, and public services of **GEORGE WASHINGTON**; such his claims to our respect and gratitude; such his title to be remembered by all the votaries of liberty who shall inhabit this fair land in all future time. Owing to the melancholy shortness of human life, and the deplorable imperfection of individual memory, the greatest and most glorious of those achievements, which are calculated to attract the admiration and call forth the plaudits of mankind, would cease in a few years to be recollected upon earth, but for the pious diligence of those whose generous ambition it is to rescue the fading memorials of renown from the gulf of oblivion, and to transmit the light of illustrious example to the remotest generations of posterity. This monument, erected in honor of him “who was first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen,” will remain, I trust, a durable memorial of the respect and gratitude of the nation to him who, more than all others, contributed to bring the nation itself into existence; and a thousand years hence, the passing traveller, who pauses here to survey the goodly fabric, shall kindle with enthusiasm as he is reminded of the glories which encircle the name of **WASHINGTON**, and thank us who are now here for the generous recollections which, by our agency, may be then awakened in his bosom.

But let me, fellow-citizens, in conclusion, call your attention

for a moment to a subject which was a source of more solicitude to the mind of this great man, when returning to the shades of private life, than all others connected with the future honor and welfare of the republic. I allude to the apprehension which he so eloquently expressed in his Farewell Address, that *geographical parties* might spring up among us by whose instrumentality the harmony of the nation might be interrupted, and the union of the States be subverted. I refer to the warning which he left on record for the future guidance of his countrymen against the effects of "characterizing parties by geographical discriminations, *Northern and Southern, Atlantic and Western.*" Let me repeat his own solemn words :

"The unity of Government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence; the support of your tranquillity at home; your peace abroad; of your prosperity; of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee that, from different causes, and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth—as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as the palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can, in any event, be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together its various parts."

May these parting admonitions of the illustrious WASHINGTON sink deep into the hearts of his countrymen of the present generation! May his solemn words of warning be treasured up by all who desire the peace, the happiness, and the perpetuity of our free institutions! May sectional jealousy, fanatical rage, the accursed ambition for notoriety and power, the low appetite for place and its emoluments, and the spirit of political rivalry, be banished forever from the council halls of the nation! Let justice, brotherly feeling, and true courtesy restrain the turbid current of angry and mischievous debate, and compose the discordant

elements of party strife, which have so long and so discredibly disturbed the public quiet, and obstructed all wholesome and necessary legislation! Here, in sight of the magnificent Capitol of this great Republic, whose pillared strength is beautifully typical of that grand federative fabric from which

—“no part can be removed

Without infringement of the general symmetry”—

in view of the majestic river whose waters, in their course towards the ocean, alike lave the tomb of WASHINGTON and whisper their murmuring homage to his memory as they flow by the place of his nativity—*here*, in the midst of the assembled wisdom of the nation, and in presence of this vast multitude of my patriotic countrymen, I urge you, and all of you—I entreat you, I beseech you, at this moment of awful peril to the Republic—that ye do your duty, and nothing but your duty, to the Constitution, to the Union, and to the sacred cause of Liberty itself!

ADDRESS

BY

GEORGE W. P. CUSTIS,

OF

Arlington.

MR. CUSTIS'S ADDRESS.

At the request of the Managers of the *Washington National Monument Society*, the veteran orator, **GEORGE W. P. CUSTIS**, of Arlington, addressed the audience, as follows :

He said that he appeared before them a man of the past. It was verging upon half a century since he first mounted the rostrum and addressed an audience on the ever to be venerated Fourth of July. He thanked God that he had been spared to his sixty-first celebration of the National Birth Day, commencing with our present happy Government. He had not the remotest idea of being called upon on the present occasion, but as he never spoke from written documents, but simply from the impulses of the heart, he should address Americans from the heart of an American.

Mr. CUSTIS observed, we celebrate this glorious day under auspices peculiarly happy ; our ceremonial being held at the base of the Monument erecting to the fame and memory of the *PATER PATRIÆ*, may it continue to rise in colossal grandeur, the work of the People of a mighty empire—the marble memorial of the Father of his Country !

When Napoleon led his legions to the conquest of Egypt, as he marched by the Pyramids of Cheops, he cried to his soldiers, "Comrades ! from the height of that pyramid forty centuries behold our actions !" So when in long distant day the chief of the great Western Empire shall lead forth our embattled host to combat for the mastery of the world, he will halt before this towering structure, and exclaim, "Soldiers ! from the cloud-capped summit of that Monument the spirit of *WASHINGTON* beholds our actions !" [Applause.] Proud and venerable are the recollections which this glorious Anniversary calls up to the Americans from the brave old days of the heroic age to the present time. Among the most touching of the memories of the past are the deaths on the day of Independence of two of the most illustrious of the Conscript Fathers of the Fourth of July, seventeen hundred and seventy-six.

JEFFERSON, rejoicing in the success of the great experiment of self-government, to the rise and progress of which he had so nobly contributed, expired with the calmness of a philosopher, at peace with himself and all mankind ; while **ADAMS**, made of sterner stuff and a more heroic cast of character, displayed "the ruling

passion strong in death." He had arrived at patriarchal age when the morning salute told of the return of the National Anniversary. As the discharge of artillery shook the couch on which the venerable statesman was reposing, he asked his attendants, "What mean those sounds?" and was answered, 'Tis the morning salute for the Fourth of July. The lamp of life, then flickering in the socket, flared up for the last time, as the dying patriot, raising himself up on his couch, emphatically exclaimed, "The Fourth of July! why that means independence! Independence forever!!" and died.

Peace to thy ashes, hero as well as statesman of Independence, honor to thy memory; for well did thy great political rival term thee "the Ajax Telamon of her cause in the House and out of the House."

"With thy latest breath,
"Thou felt the ruling passion strong in death,
"So in that moment, as in all the past,
"Oh! save my country, Heaven, it was thy last."

The orator continued: I hold in my hand a portion of earth from the stupendous mound erected by the people of Poland, to commemorate the virtues and services of their illustrious patriot and hero THADDEUS KOSCIUSKO. Kosciusko "fired by Freedom's cause, fought to make that freedom ours." Having gallantly contributed to found the Empire of National Liberty in the New World, he returned to his native land, and struggled to emancipate Poland from her thralldom, and to place her in the rank of nations. He was cloven down in a disastrous battle, "and freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell." In homage to the memory of an apostle of Liberty in two worlds, let the earth of Poland, from the mound of Kosciusko, be mingled with the marble of America in the Monument of WASHINGTON. [Applause.] Mr. CUSTIS observed: While with joyous hearts we assemble to celebrate this anniversary, how comes, it my countrymen, that we hear the ill-omened sound of Disunion so rife in the land? Of a truth, in my life's young day, it would have been a bold man who would have dared to utter the word disunion to the dear glorious old Thirteen. A standing sentiment at the 4th of July celebrations of the olden times was, "Palsied be the tongue that would utter Disunion of the States."

What an example does the events of the present day offer to the rising generation of Americans! Our forefathers taught us to believe that in union there is strength, that "united we stand, divided we fall." It was to give union and strength to our government and laws, that our admirable Constitution was formed. It is only by union and strength that the constitution can be preserved and the Republic perpetuated to remote generations. And let me ask you, Americans, have we not under the pure and benign influences of the Constitution, risen to Empire with a speed and glory unknown before in the history of nations? Has not the American Republic burst upon the world with a meteor glare that dazzles while it astonishes mankind? Look around you, and behold a spectacle unique in the history of ages!

You see the work of centuries, in other countries, accomplished in three score years in your own. An Empire of liberty and laws, comprising twenty millions of free and happy people, occupying a territory bounded by oceans, and more vast than that o'er which the Roman Eagle ever flew, or on which the Roman sandal ever trod. European nations say there is magic in this thing. True, the magic consists in three words, Liberty, Union, and the Constitution. [Applause.] And will Americans dare with unhallowed hands to destroy a fabric, the master-work of patriots and sages, the great and renowned of the land? Beware, lest in committing so monstrous a crime, you disturb not the slumbers of the tomb of Mount Vernon, and cause the sarcophagus to "ope its ponderous and marble jaws," and the shadowy form of the Father of his Country to appear among us. It would appear "more in sorrow than in anger," and would say, What is it you would do, my children, "a deed without a name?" Was it for this that, with my brave compatriots, we toiled, we fought, and bled, that we might leave to you as an inheritance the inestimable blessings of civil and religious liberty, the Constitution and laws? Was it for this that we struggled through long years of privation and blood, to found an empire that should serve as an asylum for the oppressed of all nations, and an example to those who would throw off the yoke of the oppressor, and strike for the natural rights of mankind? But if you will destroy a government, the purest, the wisest, the best, that ever was bestowed upon man, let our memories, and our ashes, be buried in its ruins. We wish not to be remembered in a dishonoured land. Pause, my children! pause in your mad career! pause and reflect upon a warning from the grave. Return to your allegiance to the Union, the Constitution and the laws; restore harmony and good fellowship among brethren of the same family. Be free, be happy; let the Republic be immortal.

The orator continued: If Disunion, that now rears its hated form among us, proceeds in its mad career, then "farewell, a long farewell, to all our greatness." The Republic "put forth its tender leaves of hope," blossomed in glory, and bore its blushing honors thick upon it. But ah, disunion is "a frost, a killing frost," and while the Republic is "ripening in its greatness, nips its root," and when it falls, "it falls like Lucifer, never to hope again."

Shame! oh my countrymen! that faction and disunion should thus stalk through our land, and the republic yet so young. Five centuries hence would be time enough for the decline, and five more for the fall of the noblest empire of liberty and laws, the purest and wisest system of human government that ever adorned the annals of mankind. But if we are to fall, let us not fall ignobly, and by suicidal hands; rather let it be in some mighty convulsion that shall shake an Hemisphere, and give an impulse to the destinies of the world.

"Then welcome Fate,
 "And if we perish, we will perish great,
 "Yet in a mighty deed, we will expire,
 "Let future ages hear it, and admire."

[Applause.]

Why (observed Mr. Custis) does the assembled wisdom of the masters of the republic deliberate so long upon a Slavery question? Why is the subject of slavery a matter of debate at all: it is an institution that hails from our colonial infancy, that has grown with our growth, strengthened with our strength; it is recognised by our laws, and admitted by the Constitution, the compact that binds us together as a nation. Would you seek the origin of this great national misfortune, for assuredly it is not our fault—look to the Bristol merchants of England, it was their insatiate avarice to monopolize the cultivation of the “*baneful weed*,” to America, “the direful spring of woes unnumbered,” that robbed Africa of her children, and urged the slave ship to the shores of the New World. In vain did the colonists petition their ancient masters to stay the evil in its commencement. Their remonstrances were unheeded, insult was added to injury, and additional cargoes of slaves disgorged upon our shores.

Permit me to observe, that in all matters touching the affair of slavery, between the North and the South, the South is decidedly the party aggrieved. It is an affair purely southern in all its bearing, and our brethren of the North ought to have nothing to do with it. Then why do they continue to foment an agitation that, while it can do them no possible good, does infinite harm to us. It is like the story of “the boys and the frogs,” while it may be an amusement to them, it is death to us.

The Northerner boasts that his foot prints are to be found on *Free Soil*. The South, the Sunny South, “my own, my native land,” with equal pride, may boast, when pointing to the reminiscences of the heroic age, and exclaim, If your soil is free, Southern blood flowed, and that in no stinted stream to make it so. Let us draw up the curtain of Time, and look upon the scenes in the dawn of the Revolution.

The yeomanry of New England are assembled on the heights of Cambridge, and see, a gallant band approaches, as gaily their banner floats in the breeze; ’tis the corps of Morgan and the Southern Hunting Shirts, pressing on to play their parts in the first acts of the Grand Drama of the Revolution. Their picturesque costume, their stalwart forms, their hardy and martial bearing, and their far-famed skill in the use of the deadly arms they bore, elicited loud shouts of welcome, as they stalked into the Camp at Cambridge, a band of young giants for the combats of liberty.

WASHINGTON’S eye beamed with joy when he beheld his re-enforcement. Full well did he know the value of the Hunting Shirt, full well had he proven its might on the fatal field of the Monongahela, when three companies of riflemen held at bay the savage foe, and covered the retreat of the shattered remains of a veteran army.

Will you change the scene to Long Island, the first pitched battle of the war, where the southern chivalry shown in its native lustre? Virginia, Maryland, and gallant little Delaware, crowned themselves with laurels on that memorable day that time or circumstance can never fade.

At the Battle of the Brandywine, illustrious Greene prayed of the Commander in Chief, that he would remember in the general orders the conduct of his (Greene's) brave division in that hard-fought and disastrous day; WASHINGTON modestly declined, saying, I am aware, General, of their merits, but they are my countrymen; then said Greene, who it is to be recollected in martial renown, was second only to him who was First of All, May I beg of your excellency, as a special favor, that you will, for the remainder of the war, permit me to command a Southern Division?

But why multiply instances, so many of which are treasured in history? Go to the fields of the Revolution, dig up the remains of the brave, who died for liberty, and my life on it, you will find the bones of many a southerner there, *mouldered into Free Soil*. [Applause.]

Mr. C. continued: Far be it from your orator to speak one word in disparagement of the northern troops in the War of Independence; they were good soldiers, patriotic and brave, and stood deservedly high in the affections of the Chief. We had happily in the "times that tried men's souls," no sectional lines of demarcation, no distinction between North and South, while Americans from each, fought side by side, for that invaluable boon, which was to become the common property of all. Then why distinction now, between members of the same political family?

I affirm for the South, for my own, my native land, that although she has slavery in her bosom, and so had Rome, Athens, and Sparta, in the palmiest days of those ancient Republics, yet the spirit of liberty exists in as much purity at this time, south of Mason's and Dixon's line, as it did in the brave old days of '76.

We of the South are willing to give "honor to whom honor is due." We yield the palm to our northern brethren, in their steady habits, their untiring industry, their gallant enterprise, their useful improvements, their extensive commerce, and their public schools; but while we envy not their greatness and prosperity, we have to pray of their magnanimity, the one poor privilege, that on a *particular subject they will let us alone*. [Applause.]

The orator continued: Friends and countrymen, clouds and darkness appear gathering around our destinies, but come good, come ill, come storm, come sunshine, there is one who honors us with his presence on this interesting occasion, who will do his duty in the approaching crisis, be the consequences what they may.

"Behold the Chief who now commands,
 "Again to serve his country stands,
 "The rock on which the storm may beat,
 "But armed in virtue, firm and true,
 "His hopes are fixed on heaven and you."

Support your Chief in the high station to which your gratitude for his great services has raised him. He has often lain hard for America; aye, and from the lakes of the West to the swamps of Florida, and the torrid plains of Mexico, has borne your Star Spangled Banner in triumph in the field. Support him in his measures

for the public weal ; he asked not his high office at your hands ; he would have been content with his fame, and to have retired to private life, asking no other reward for his long and gallant services, than the affection of his fellow citizens. But the people ordered otherwise. They determined to show to the world that Republics were not ungrateful ; and from north, south, east and west, the welkin rang with the cry of Hurrah for old Rough and Ready, President of the United States ! Then support the man of your choice. After forty years spent in the service of his country, his grey hairs will not betray her now. [Applause.]

The orator concluded by observing : Reflect, Americans, what a pretence our sectional differences afford to the despots of Europe to decry republican institutions ; and how they exult in the hope that the failure of self-government in the United States may lead to the establishment of monarchy throughout the world. I trust that they will soon find that they have reckoned without their host, and I pray God to grant, and it would cheer my old heart to see the American people, having settled their difficulties among themselves, unite in restoring to the Republic that glorious spirit of patriotism and brotherly affection that animated their fathers in the brave old days of '76, and the cry be heard from the ocean to the Alleghanies, from Maine to California, of Liberty, Union and the Constitution.

“ Then firm, united let us be,
 “ Rallying round our Liberty,
 “ As a band of brothers joined,
 “ Peace and safety we shall find.”

GOD SAVE THE REPUBLIC !

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